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ABSTRACT

Designed for family child care providers, this report offers information and guidelines for the action planning involved in organizing for advocacy. Discussion covers issue campaigns, reasons to organize, considerations involved in determining and promoting issues, and strategy development. It is recommended that providers focus on a particular concern or aspect of an issue when they are planning for action. The report offers five reasons for organization: (1) when individuals are organized, they become more united and thus have a more powerful voice; (2) home-based providers are a separate constituency and must organize among themselves; (3) information, votes, people, and organization can be used effectively to initiate change; (4) action to challenge and dismantle the barriers of inappropriate policies must be taken; and (5) organization channels energy and grievances into activities that lead to improvements and increase people's ability to impact decisions affecting their lives. Five primary considerations involved in developing a strategy are included. These concern goals, organizational considerations, allies and adversaries, targets, and tactics. General guidelines for action planning are discussed at the end of the report. A strategy chart is appended. (GLR)

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Family Child Care Providers: Organizing for Advocacy

Action Planning - Organizing An Issue Campaign

Organizing is essentially a series of issue campaigns, and can be initiated in two ways: 1) locate a constituency that is sympathetic to an issue, or 2) pick an issue that is reflective of a particular constituency's concerns. A successful method of organizing providers is to find an issue that effects the majority of home-based care givers within your community. Many people consider organizing a technique: like putting together an outline for an article or story.

When planning an action, focus on a particular concern or aspect of an issue. If inappropriate zoning laws, for example, prevent home based care givers from operating their business, pin point a specific problem area, such as: arbitrary enforcement of the ruling or cost prohibitive fees for permits.

Why Organize?

The most fundamental reason for organizing is empowerment, both personal and organizational. When organized, individuals become united - creating a stronger more powerful voice. Organizing also offers an avenue for information sharing and skills-building, which are also empowerment tools.

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Another reason for organizing is that home-based providers are a separate constituency and must organize among themselves. Family day care providers have specific concerns within the child care community. The best person to speak on behalf of the profession is a provider.

A third reason for organizing is that in our society there are the "haves and the have nots". Or in other words, people with power versus people without power. Power is often associated with money or being able to make and enforce rules. As a result, people frequently fail to challenge policies. But power can also be information, votes, people and organization. All of these elements can be used effectively to initiate change.

The truth is that a minority of people make decisions for the majority. Yet sometimes policy decisions are inappropriate, and therefore must be recognized as bad. Recognition of a problem, however, does not mean victory. Action must be taken to challenge and dismantle the barriers; organizing must occur.

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Finally, organizing involves channeling people's energy and grievances into activities that lead to improvements and an increase in people's ability to impact decisions affecting their lives. This self-actualization is a fist step to personal empowerment: an important goal for all organizers. Organizing should lend itself to:

o Winning Improvements. Improvements can be won working within or outside of the system - either way there is no reason for complacency.

o Increasing participation in the decision making process. Increased participation leads to greater control over one's own life, not just a single issue.

o Building your organization. Organization is power.

Determining the Issue

In determining whether you should spend time working on an issue, consider the pros and the cons. For example, do association members feel the issue is relevant to the organization? Does the issue have emotional appeal? What is the media's perception; is the community aware of the issue? Also, examine:

- o the history of the issue;
- o the political climate;
- o organizational ability...people power and resources;
- o organizational mileage, how many people will you recruit;
- o allies;
- o timing;
- o the campaign's costs, your budget or availability of money;
- o the opposition, their strengths and weaknesses;
- o the controversy: organizational or individual attacks (explore ramifications, but remember that discrediting dissent and name calling is an intimidation tactic);
- o public relations/media outreach; and
- o fund-raising possibilities.

Know what you want from the action. What are the goals? What commitments do you want to achieve at the end of the action? Will there be follow-up activities?

Cutting the Issue

Once you have determined your issue(s), the next decision is how to "cut the issue." In short, cutting the issue is an organizing term for promoting the campaign.

You want to cut the issue so that your campaign increases public awareness, highlights your organization as well as makes an appeal for support. Polarize the issue as a conflict between individuals involved in the campaign and the opposition.

Developing a Strategy

A plan of action is a well thought out, logical progression of strategies. A DAO (Direct Action Organizing) Strategy Chart can help facilitate a strategy session. The chart simplifies planning by identifying five primary considerations that must be taken into account when putting together your strategy. They are:

- goals: long-term, short-term, and mid-term;
- organizational considerations: money, time, people, history of issue;
- allies and adversaries;
- targets: this is not your adversary, but the person or policy that directly effects your concern; and
- tactics: be innovative - start small and use the theory of escalating tactics. Also involve many people.

Sometimes you must do research to determine who has the power or where the power lies. When you research, remember that an adversary is a group or individual who opposes your position. A target, however, is the group/person/policy that can impact your ability to make change. A target is the person/policy where you focus your challenge.

Set up a time line once you've developed a strategy and assign specific tasks to individuals. Constantly re-evaluate your activities, strategies and objectives. Remember the "theory of escalating tactics." Start out with small events and build into larger more visible tactics. When planning an action decide on your mode of operation, always:

- identify spokesperson(s);
- delegate responsibilities, involve everyone (testimony, petitions, outreach, and fundraising);
- determine the roles of key persons for before, during, and after the event;
- develop a time line;
- write a script if necessary;
- make sure association members are aware of the event;
- caucus when needed;
- get media and fundraising mileage out of the action;
- have fact sheets and educational material available; and
- keep a record of people attending the meeting/event, have sign-up sheet available, get the new people involved.

Develop committees to divide-up workload. Delegate responsibility to avoid burnout. Establish a core organizing committee to coordinate all aspects of the campaign. Committee members should report regularly to the coordinator. Tasks will include:

- reach out to media: develop press list, press releases, and make follow-up calls;
- contact officials: send letters, make phone calls, attend meetings of other groups;
- responsibility for nitty gritty: reserve place of action, secure permits, order mikes, chairs, and a platform, offer child care;
- contact members: use index cards for files, establish information networks; schedule calls and have available a sign-up sheet with activities listed;
- reach out to community members; this involves both coalition or organizational outreach as well as individual outreach through tabling, phone banking, and door-to-door.

Hold evaluation sessions frequently. Also, fundraise whenever possible. Use in-kind services, free publicity and donations. During the event relate to the crowd by having:

- sign-up sheets available, petitions;
- fact sheets outline the issue, your concerns, and plans; and
- details about time, place and purpose of the next step.

Have the event end on an "up" note; either as a victory or a positive demonstration/confrontation.

Summary

When organizing, remember that individuals who are treated unfairly do not organize because they feel powerless. They are unfamiliar with the system or developing an organizing stategy.

People come to an organization out of their own self interest and a desire to bring about change. Be sensitive to how people feel: when working alone, people often feel powerless.

Know that actions sometime require conflict and rocking the boat. You are working for a sharing of power, while those in power want to maintain control. Consequently, conflict is bound to occur and may be unavoidable. But complacency with inappropriate policies is not necessary.

Power in and of itself is an illusion. Once people move into action (self-actualization) they will understand more fully the balance of power. This action will serve to empower individuals and organizations.

Keep in mind when planning an action that you are not involved in a misunderstanding, but a conflict. Also, you do not have to come out with a universal right or wrong. Once you choose an issue, however, there are no longer two sides of the story...you must emphasize the points of conflict, not the good points of the other side. And finally, keep your organization's name, concern and goals visible.

In closing remember that action planning should:

Get people involved. Through self-actualization people will be motivated to make positive changes and overcome their sense of powerlessness.

Build your organization. Organization is power. Avoid authoritarianism by building democratic mechanisms of decision making/ representation into the organization's structure.

Disseminate information and increase the public's awareness. Don't hold on to information, for knowledge is power.

Build a lasting movement and increase family day care provider's power. This requires a long series of strategy planning and issue campaigns, recruitment and publicity. Update members through frequent issues and skills building workshops.

Demystify how decisions are made. Educate people to how a law is passed. Know who the key policy makers are, their voting record, and their position on your issue. Reinforce the fact that policy makers are not super heros, but people like you and others.

Personalize the issue and the target. For example, if you target an insurance commissioner and his/her daughter is in family day care, bring the issue to that level if applicable.

Prepared by: National Family Day Care Project
June 1986

STRATEGY CHART

After you've decided on an issue, use this chart as a guide to develop your strategy. Be detailed, put down all possibilities.

Vision Objectives Goals	Organizational Considerations	Constituencies Members & Allies	Targets	Tactics
Long-term Short-term Mid-term	-money -time -does it build the organization ? -individual responsibility -publicity, will it be positive or negative?	-child care advocates -parents -teachers -women's groups	-decision makers -personalize -find the weakness of target -policies that need to be changed	-publicity -open hearings -legal action -letter writing -phone-in -petitions *Escalate tactics *Make sure your purpose is clear *Be creativ